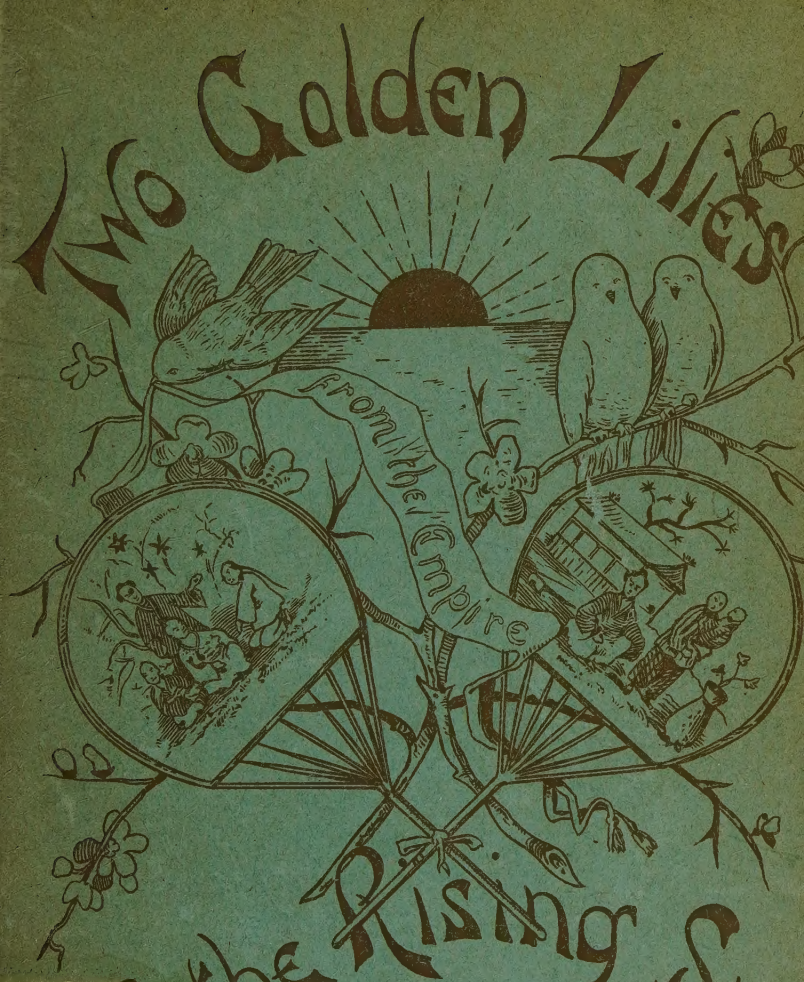
Two Golden Lilies



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TWO GOLDEN LILIES

FROM THE

EMPIRE OF THE RISING SUN

MRS. AHOK.

Two Golden Lilies

FROM THE

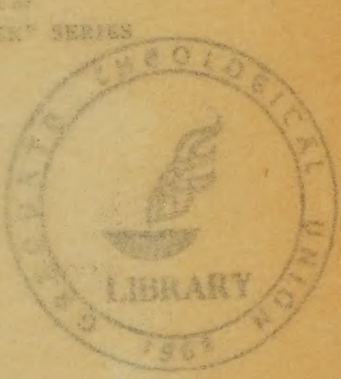
EMPIRE OF THE RISING SUN

BY

M. FAGG

AUTHOR OF

"GOOD CHEER" SERIES



LONDON

CHURCH OF ENGLAND ZENANA MISSIONARY SOCIETY

27 CHANCERY LANE, W.C.

MARSHALL BROTHERS

KESWICK HOUSE, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

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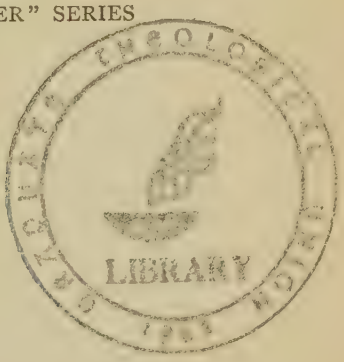

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PREFACE

THE present edition of *Two Golden Lilies* has been published by the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society at the suggestion of Mrs. Fagg, who has kindly placed the book at their disposal, thinking it may foster an interest in the Society's work in China, and also that it may gain prayer and help for Mrs. Ahok herself. The two former editions have been sold almost entirely in the Colonies.

Mrs. Ahok's influence has been widely felt; at the time of her visit to England there were less than ten ladies working in those parts of the Fuh-Kien Province in the sphere of the C.M.S. and C.E.Z.M.S. There are now forty-two in connection with the C.E.Z.M.S. alone. In the actual work in Foochow City, Mrs. Ahok is herself still active; she is definitely helping with the C.E.Z.M.S. Upper Class Girls' School, where her aid is much valued, and she is loved and respected by the girls. She is also a great help in visiting the rich ladies in and round the city with our missionaries. The death of her son, just as he was beginning to earn money, leaves his widow and two children mainly dependent on Mrs. Ahok, which means a considerable drain on her resources.

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TWO GOLDEN LILIES

CHAPTER I

The Visit of a Mandarin and his Wife

SOME years ago great interest was felt in England by the visit of a Chinese lady, who had undertaken this long journey from home in order to plead face to face with an English audience for volunteers to teach her people the precious truths of the religion that had brought light and gladness into her own life.

Hers was no ordinary mission, for never before had a lady belonging to the ancient aristocracy of the "Empire of the Rising Sun" crossed the ocean to appear before the British public, and the little, gentle, intelligent woman found attentive and responsive listeners as she told them, through an interpreter, the earnest wish of her heart.

Tiny embroidered slippers have long been familiar as drawing-room ornaments, but now the poor little stunted feet themselves—the "golden lilies" of Chinese poets—became for the first time realities to Mrs. Ahok's sympathising English friends, as she pathetically begged

them to excuse her for not standing while speaking, on account of the pain it gave her bandaged feet.

Mrs. Ahok's visit was not a long one, but the impression it made was too deep to be soon forgotten.

Many prayers and loving thoughts followed the brave-hearted little woman as she embarked on her long homeward journey, and several Englishwomen, moved by her appeal, have already risen from their homes to go forth with Christ's Gospel of glad tidings to that sunny but spiritually benighted land.

Therefore the writer of these pages has acceded to the urgent request of friends, both in England and the Colonies, to give to the public the following epitome of Mrs. Ahok's life previous to her visit to England, together with various accounts of that visit and its subsequent sad sequel.

Very soon after my arrival in China in 1878 a Mandarin called at the schoolhouse to bid me welcome. I was astonished, and asked him why he had called to welcome me to Foochow.

"Because," he answered, "you have come to teach the people of my country about the true God."

"Are you a Christian?" I asked.

"No," he said, "but I like Christianity. I go to church sometimes, and I know the doctrine is true and the preachers are good."

We held a very interesting conversation, and when he left I pressed him to send his wife to see me. I learnt afterwards that this Chinese gentleman was a merchant; that he ranked as a Mandarin (a Government official or petty governor, the position exempting the possessor

from corporal punishment); that he was a very kind-hearted man, and spent a great deal of money in rescuing little baby girls who were doomed to destruction; also that he was very liberal. But just at this time persecution was raging round us everywhere. We were threatened with ejectment. Part of the Mission premises were burnt down, and the Chinese determined to make good their case by appealing to English law—so the bitter present blotted from the memory all that had occurred in the near past; and the visit from the Mandarin, Hok Lee Sing Sang, was forgotten, when one morning my servant, Lee Chi, came running in exclaiming—

"Kuniong, the Tai Tai is coming."

"Which Tai Tai?" I asked, "Tai Tai" being the title of a rich Chinese lady.

"Hok Lee Sing Sang Nyiong," he answered, and as he spoke I heard the chair-bearers crying out, "Twai a Twai a,"—"A great person is coming."

Lee Chi opened the door, and several slave girls and other attendants helped out of their chairs and led in two ladies — Mrs. Ahok, as we will call the Mandarin's wife, and her mother. They had come to luncheon, and did not let me know because they wanted to see an English luncheon without preparation. They stayed the whole afternoon, looking at all my English things, and listening to what the matron and I said; and then I called up the elder girls to sing to them. We had several visits from other ladies about this period, and God put the wish into my heart to spend a little time every midday in prayer for them.

CHAPTER II

A Chinese Feast

SHORTLY after this I was invited to a Chinese feast at Mr. Ahok's house. Bishop Bowman was there, visiting Foochow, and all the latest arrivals among the missionaries, with others, were invited to meet him. We sat down to a luncheon of fourteen courses, served in silver dishes, with cups and spoons, as follows : [1] —

Pig Head Jelly and Duck Liver.
Roast Fowl and Ham.
Salted Pig Feet and Prawns.
Preserved Egg and Sausage.
Birdnest and Pigeon Egg.

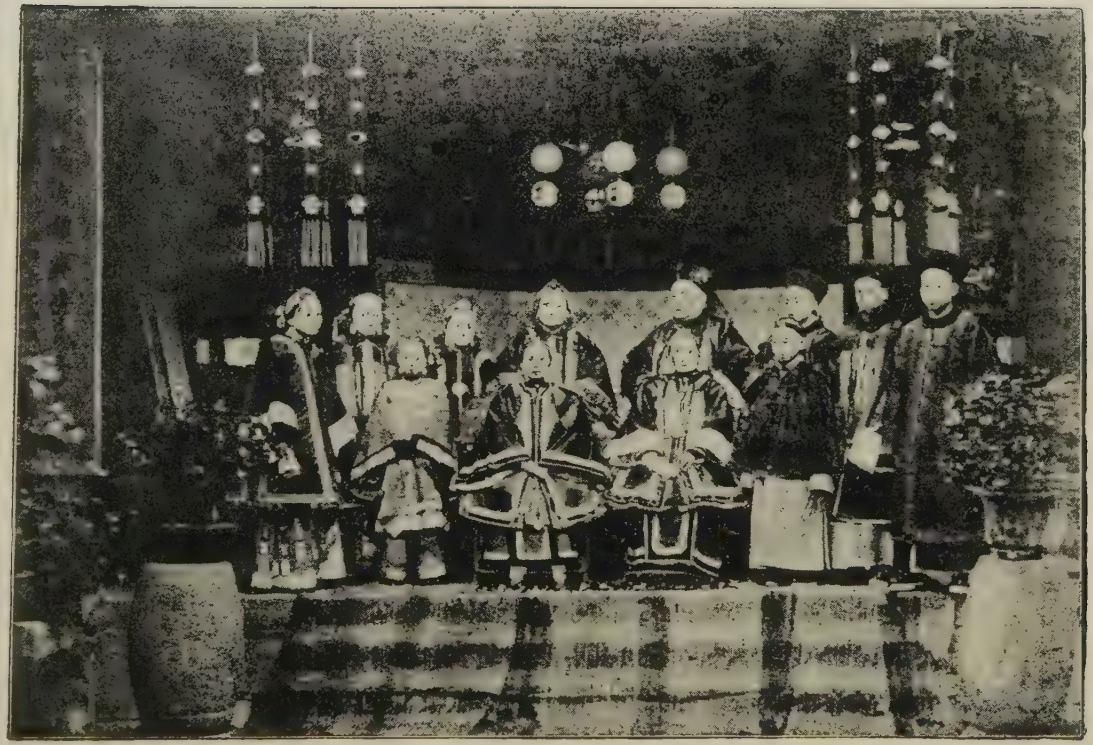
Shark Fin and Crab.	Roast Fat Duck.
Baked Cuttle Fish.	Roast Pig Liver.
Fried Pheasant.	Chicken Soup.
Stuffing Bread.	Almond Tea.
Spring Rolled Cake.	Sponge Cake.

Melon Seed and Almond.

Preserved Fruits.	Fresh Fruits.

I was very much pleased with the house. Entering

[1] See also Miss Gordon Cumming's *Wanderings in China* for a further description of this house and feast.



MR. AND MRS. AHOK AND FAMILY.

a large gate, my chair was lifted over a very high sill into a yard where the chairs were kept. Through this courtyard, over another high sill into another courtyard, with rooms on either side for the gentlemen to read, smoke, or drink tea in ; through this, and over another sill into a courtyard where flowers were blooming, and on either side ante-rooms for the sons and sons' wives. Just before us were some steps, and on the top of them was the ancestral hall, or reception-room. The picture given here is the ancestral hall, with the occupants arranged along the top of the stairs for the photographer.

But when I went, only the ladies were there, seated on beautifully carved Ningpo blackwood chairs, covered with gold cloth, and scrolls hanging all round. Mr. Ahok met me, and introduced me to his family, as he did with all the invited guests. Then he escorted us up into his foreign drawing-room, explaining meanwhile that he had an English dining-room, drawing-room, and other rooms, built for the reception and convenience of his foreign visitors, as we were styled.

He asked us if the drawing-room was furnished after English style, and we said, " Not quite, but it is very nice." Then he invited us to rearrange it, as he wanted it to be " just like." Then the ladies took us into their apartments, where there were many idols. We asked the reason of the high sills we had to get over before we could enter any room, and the answer was, " The higher the sill, the higher the rank." I was quite sorry when it was time for me to leave.

CHAPTER III

Learning to Read

A SHORT time more elapsed, and our lawsuit ended in our having to vacate the city, and move into Nantai, the foreign settlement. We had hardly settled down, when Mrs. Ahok called and asked me to teach her English. At first I objected on the ground that I did not go to China for that purpose. However, I had a long talk with her, and promised to bring her request before the other missionaries. Accordingly, on the following Friday evening, I went, as was my wont, to the prayer-meeting held by the American missionaries at Ponasang. There I told Mrs. Ahok's request, and one dear old lady, now in glory, said—

"We have prayed for that family ever since we first came to China, nearly thirty years ago, and perhaps this is the way God intends answering our prayers."

They all prayed for me that I might be guided aright, and on the following Wednesday afternoon, when we met at our own prayer-meeting (C.M.S.), it was spoken of again, and I proposed if Mrs. Ahok would read the Bible for one hour and a half, I would teach her English for one hour and a half, thus devoting

three hours three times a week to her, if one of the married ladies could take my afternoon classes, and so set me free for this work, there being no other unmarried lady working in our Mission at that time. Mrs. Lloyd, the wife of the Rev. L. Lloyd, undertook this work, then I wrote these proposals out, and sent them to Mr. Ahok. He approved of the conditions, but wished me to go to the Yamen, as his house is called. This I could not do, so it was agreed that Mrs. Ahok should come to me. Though much against the custom, yet she braved it all, and often when she has come, and I have gone downstairs to help her up, I have wondered how she could steady her body at all upon those tiny feet, *only three inches long* —bound, crushed, and crippled since early childhood, according to Chinese custom. It is a most unusual thing for a Chinese woman to know how to read and write the Chinese characters; but Mrs. Ahok's mother had learned herself, and knew the value of it enough to let her daughter study with her brothers.

We began our first day with the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, my favourite chapter among the heathen, and then she took her first English lesson. She was an apt scholar, but she found the English language very difficult. However, she persevered. When the summer holidays were drawing near, she asked me not to go away, as was our usual custom, but stay and let her come to live with me.

"Why do you wish to stay with me?" I asked.

"Oh," she answered, "you say all that is so nice; I want to come and see if you live like you talk."

"But," I urged, "I have only one room and one bed; how can you come?"

"Oh," she answered, "I will send a bed and have it put up in your room, and I will bring my own servant to wait upon me."

She came, and followed me about everywhere, asking me to translate all my home letters and all I wrote home. She joined me in prayer night and morning—that is, she listened while I prayed. One night I went to bed with a bad headache, and could not have family worship. In the middle of the night she heard me awake, and said—

"Is your head better?"

"No," I answered.

"Then I do not believe in your God," she said; "for you worship Him, and I asked Him to make you better."

This led to a profitable conversation on asking according to God's will.

CHAPTER IV

Sickness and Death

AFTER a few days she heard that her little grandson was sick, and went home to see what she could do. I followed her in the evening, and found the child very ill, and I suggested that a foreign doctor be sent for. "No," they said, "our own doctor will do to-night. We will send for more medicine." The messenger was despatched with full particulars to a Chinese doctor, who wrote a prescription, half of which Mrs. Ahok erased, and then sent a servant for the other half of the ingredients, and had them boiled down. I stayed until eleven o'clock that night, and at seven the next morning a messenger called to say that the grandson was dead, and her own little adopted boy was very ill. I went at once. The son's wife was in sore distress—her only child, and that child a boy, lay dead in the house. The wailing was very, very sad, and Mrs. Ahok was mourning over the fading away of her own little adopted boy.

I sent off at once for Dr. Rennie, a Scotch doctor living at Foochow, and when he came he said the little fellow was certainly very ill, but he could not undertake the case unless I would remain to nurse

him; "for," he said, "you know they will only get my medicine, smell it, throw it away, and then the child will die, and I shall be blamed with the death."

"What is he saying?" asked Mrs. Ahok; and when I explained she said, "Oh, do stay; you shall do as you like if you will only stay."

So I consented. They had the room off the English drawing-room prepared for me, and a part of the verandah turned into a bathroom. They did, indeed, all they could for my well-being. The doctor paid several visits each day, for the child was very ill. Mr. Ahok's mother, one of the most bigoted idolaters I have ever seen, was living in the house. She very much wanted to offer all the child's food to the idols before it was brought upstairs. We were determined this should not be, so at last we prepared the food ourselves. Mrs. Ahok's mother came to stay in the house at this time, and each morning she was in the room before I was dressed. Each day I endeavoured to be before her and failed, until one day I rose in the dark, and then she refused to leave for breakfast. I wondered why she wanted so much to see me dress. The morning was wearing away; at last she said—

"Are you not going to pray this morning?"

"Yes," I answered, "I have prayed."

"And you did not let me see you!" she said in an aggrieved tone.

"Why," I asked, "do you wish to see me pray?"

"Oh, it is so very funny," she replied. "You pray to nothing; how *can* nothing hear you?"

Here was a lovely opportunity, and so I went on

telling of our God, who is a Spirit, pervading everywhere with His presence, seeing all we do, hearing all we say. She listened with rapt attention. Then she asked—

"Did your God ever do anything wonderful?"

"Yes, indeed, He did," I answered.

"Well," she went on, "when our gods do anything wonderful we write a book about it."

"We have a book too," I said. "God inspired holy men of old to write what He said, and record what others did and said. Only this morning I was reading about Daniel and the three children in the fiery furnace."

She expressed a wish to read it for herself. At that instant my servant brought in my mail, and I sent him for a Chinese Bible. When he returned, I opened at the Book of the Prophet Daniel, and instead of going to her dinner, she sat and read that book all the afternoon. The little sick boy was improving in health, and as I had some important business needing my attention at the school, I went out, leaving strict orders that nothing was to be given to the child, whom I called Charlie, until my return.

Alas! Mr. Ahok's mother would not be controlled. She persisted in going up to see the child, and gave him something which made him very ill again. The doctor was in constant attendance, and all our efforts had to be renewed. When Mr. Ahok came home, he was told what had happened, and he and Mrs. Ahok and myself knelt down and prayed God to forgive the grandmother, and take all angry feelings out of our hearts. Then I asked that each night and morning, while I remained, the family might be gathered and

I would read a portion of Scripture and pray. Mr. Ahok gave orders that this was to be done, but no one knelt at these gatherings except Mrs. Ahok until Sunday morning, when Mrs Ahok's mother knelt, saying—

"I, too, will pray to Kuniong's God."

She did not mean that she would be a Christian, or give up her idols, but that she would pray to God as well as to them. God answered our prayers: the child again recovered, and I proposed going up the mountain for the ten remaining days. Mr. and Mrs. Ahok begged me to take the little boy and his nurse with me, arranging that fresh meat and beef-tea should be sent up for him. I consented, and at the end of my stay Mr. Ahok came up with a few friends, bringing some very special tea buds to drink tea with his friends, and thus show his gratitude. We returned from the mountain, the child went to his home, I to the school, and Mrs. Ahok resumed her lessons.

CHAPTER V

Bible Study with Chinese Ladies

ALL went on as usual for a few weeks, when a request came that I would speak to Mr. Ahok before the school began. About 8 o'clock a.m. he came and asked me to begin Bible teaching in his house. I pleaded want of time, and he said, "Oh, Kuniong, all your girls are Christians (?), but all my females are heathen; cannot you come once a week and teach them?" I explained that every day was full; perhaps one of the other ladies would go. "No," he said; "you have lived in the house; they know you, and will listen to you."

This request was laid before the other workers, and Mrs. Robert Stewart, the wife of the Rev. R. W. Stewart, C.M.S., undertook my class on Thursday evenings, if I would go. So it was arranged, and I asked Mr. Ahok to provide a New Testament and a hymn-book for each of the inmates, not that they could then read, but I hoped that they would eventually do so.

The first Thursday evening came, and a chair with bearers was sent for me. When I arrived at the house, I entered the ante-room to the left of the group shown on a preceding page. All the ladies and female attendants huddled together, and I invited them to be seated, and

they in turn invited me to sit. Finding they could not be persuaded to do so, I found a hymn for them, and commenced singing "Ja su tiang nu wa se ching" ("Jesus loves me, this I know"). When the hymn was finished, I knelt down and prayed. These friends evidently thought this all a good joke, for they were laughing and talking all the time. When I arose from my knees I said, "Friends, my God is in this room, and when I speak to Him you must please be very quiet indeed," and they were always so after this.

Then began my first Bible reading. I took the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel—the Good Shepherd and the sheep. While explaining about the sheep—how that when once out of the meadow or paddock they are incapable of finding their way back, and how the shepherd not only looks after them, but keeps the wild animals, any foe in fact, away from them — they appeared so highly amused that I said—

"What is the matter?"

"Why," they said, "you say we are like sheep, and we have no wool on our back, and we have not four legs."

Then I tried again, and told of our utterly lost condition, and how the Lord Jesus left His glorious home above to come and find us and take us back to God. Here again they laughed outright, and when I asked the cause, they answered—

"Oh, Kuniong, you are wrong to-night; we are not lost, we are all at home."

The time was gone, and I was not sorry. We sang the same hymn over again, then prayer, and I invited them to be seated, and they invited me to "maing,

maing, kiang" (slowly, slowly, walk);[1] and I was carried home. As I was going along under that starlit sky, I cried from my heart, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And as they carried me through my gate a voice seemed to say, "Am not I the Lord?" "Yes, Lord," I answered, "You are; it is Your work, not mine."

The next Thursday, when I went, we read the story of the blind man. Much prayer had been offered to God for me, and "I was helped." But I found the room not large enough, so I wrote to Mr. Ahok asking if we might use his foreign dining-room, and he readily gave his consent. On the third evening the room was well lighted, chairs and books put round, and as soon as I entered the ladies came in and took their seats. When the hymn "Jesus loves me" was well known, we began another, "He leadeth me; oh, blessed thought!" And Mrs. Ahok would help each of them during the week to learn to read one verse in the chapter we were to study the following week, and very soon we were able to read round a whole chapter, verse about. In time that meeting for Bible study grew, until we had thirty at one time, forming two rows round the table.

[1] A polite parting phrase.

CHAPTER VI

Prayer, and some Wonderful Answers

ONE evening Mr. Ahok came in just to see us, and I asked him to remain and close with prayer. He did so, and took each member to God by name, and told the special case all out to Him. I remember only a part of it, where he prayed—

"O God Almighty, for Jesus Thy Son's sake, look down on my mother; she has one hundred idols, and her heart is so hard; make her soft to worship Thee, for she is nearly eighty years old. There is my wife, too. She has been learning about Thee, but she does not want to give up her idols, and she does not worship Thee; make her a true changed heart. Then her mother, she reads Thy Word, but does not believe in Thee. My eldest son's wife is very hard, she will not trust Thee."

And so on, until all in the room had been specially commended to God.

I mention this here, for in the time to come that prayer was fully answered, even to the very old woman, nearly eighty. All the petitions were granted. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." He always does cash His own promises, when He is trusted to do so. One day, when Mrs.

Ahok was learning with me, she seemed so sad that I asked the reason. She said—

"Oh, Kuniong, I am so unhappy! I am not head in my own house. You know here in China, 'without children, without honour.' And Mr. Ahok's first wife had children; she died, then Mr. Ahok married me. I have been his wife for twelve years, and he wants me to rule, and I cannot, because I have no child. Would not your God give me one? Did He ever give anyone a son?"

The occasion was unique. Here was I, young in years and in experience, being asked a most difficult question. I turned to God's Word, and read the story of Hannah. Then I said—

"It is true God can do all things, and we are told to make our requests known unto Him."

Then we knelt, and for the first time I heard Mrs. Ahok pray aloud. Her prayer was: "O God, Jehovah, I come to Thee now; help me not to doubt, teach me this good doctrine, give me Thy Holy Spirit, and please give me a son, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

The summer came again, and I was ordered away from Foochow, and took the opportunity afforded me of visiting friends in Australia. I just went for the voyage in the same vessel there and back, but owing to stoppages at many places, the time flew by, until nearly three months had passed away before my return. The school had reassembled, sickness was among the scholars. One girl was so ill with typhoid that the other girls were removed with the matron to one of the city chapels, and I was left to nurse the sick. Some weary weeks followed ere I could again find time to visit Mrs. Ahok, and when I

did I found her unable to come to me again for lessons. I began the Bible readings again, and had the joy of knowing that all the idols had been removed from the house, and those belonging to Mr. Ahok's mother were taken to her own apartment; and also of attending, for the first time, a Gospel address, to be given weekly in one of Mr. Ahok's stores.

About this time the gentlemen of the household wanted to have a Bible reading like the ladies, so it was arranged that they should come into the dining-room at eight o'clock, when the ladies went out. Then Mr. Ahok began a Sunday service at his house, and on one occasion an eye-witness told me there were eighty persons present. But up to this time Mr. Ahok had not been able to see his way to cast out the idols from his store, or to close his business on Sundays. He had not, either, come forward for baptism; but God is never in a hurry, and He was surely leading him along.

One morning, after my patient had recovered, and the girls had returned to the schoolhouse, I received an urgent message to go at once and see Mrs. Ahok, who was very ill. I went, and asked Mr. Ahok how long she had been so ill, and he said three days. I begged to be allowed to send for a foreign doctor, and he consented. I sent for Dr. Adam, as Dr. Rennie and he were partners, but the former was absent just then. Dr. Adam quickly came, and before he left he put into my arms the *boy given in answer to prayer*. He was, indeed, the "Christian doctrine little boy," as they called him, and great were the rejoicings over his birth. Such grand presents, and so many of them. The house seemed overflowing with silks, gold ornaments, and

MRS. AHOK, WITH HER SON AND ADOPTED SON.

many kinds of sweetmeats and cakes. Great was the ceremony on the third day, when the little fellow's head was shaved, and for many days afterwards. When Mrs. Ahok grew stronger, I said—

"You will now serve God, will you not?"

She said, "I can no longer worship idols, but I do not know how to be a Christian; I must pray to be taught."

This picture is Mrs. Ahok with the little adopted boy on her left, the child I nursed; the child on her right is the one given in answer to prayer.

The following letter to myself from Mr. Ahok at this time may interest my readers:—

FOOCHOW, *October* 21, 1881.

DEAR MISS FOSTER,

It is most kind of you, as you sent a servant to my house to make inquiry after Mrs. Ahok. Yesterday she had a little fever, and after taking medicine given by Dr. Sparr (Miss Sparr, M.D., an American), felt a little better.

Yesterday Dr. Sparr was in my house, and was obliged to bathe my baby very cleanly. I was sorry that you could not come to see the interesting bathing.

I was very busy yesterday receiving presents from my friends, and attending my guests. I had a dinner party last evening. It is the Chinese custom that three days after birth of a baby in a family whose friends and relatives make presents of chickens and vermicelli for the baby's mother to eat; and the family have to give dinners to their friends in return thanks for their presents.

I received great many chickens and vermicelli. I think if Mrs. Ahok can eat all of them, she will become twice larger and heavier than she is now.

I am extremely sorry about your headache, and that I

have been the cause of making you unwell, as you was confined too closely in Mrs. Ahok's room and got the warm air, and I hope you will soon be better.

The highly family in the city, of whom I spoke to you the other day, have intended to give dinner to my European friends and myself on to-day; but I have asked him to postpone it till next week, when you are better, and able to accompany us in going to his house.

I shall have a meeting in my house to-morrow at 2.30 o'clock p.m. I have invited Mr. and Mrs. Ohlinger, Mr. and Mrs. Chandler, and Miss Sparr to come to join me in prayer, and I hope you will be able to come.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

T. AHOK.

CHAPTER VII

Anxious Questioning, and Departure

ON Saturday morning I used to visit the hospitals, and frequently on my way back to the school I would go into Mr. Ahok's store and join him, sometimes alone, sometimes with others, in praying for guidance, and for grace to obey the guiding hand of God when clearly seen. When our yearly Conference commenced I told the Rev. Ting Sing Sang about Mr. Ahok and his difficulties, and asked if he and some of the other clergy (Chinese) would call on him on the morrow and see what could be done. He promised to do this, so I sent a note to Mr. Ahok, telling him what I had done. They met. It was entirely a Chinese meeting, and the account, as I sent it to the *Church Missionary Gleaner* for June 1883, shall be copied here :—

The Catechists and Christians unanimously agreed that the stores (places of business) must be closed on Sundays, that it should be done slowly. First an almanac should be drawn up denoting on what days in the Chinese year the English Sunday would fall, and such days to be duly marked, and notice

given that no business would be transacted on those days. But as many of the retail customers came from a distance, and as Mr. Ahok would not like to lose the custom of those who had hitherto so generously supported him, the stores would not be closed until this notice had been well circulated. The employees were to receive the same wages for that day if they attended divine service instead of serving behind the counter. If this was not agreed to, they must leave. Mr. Ahok willingly took these proposals, and submitted them to his partners, who still stood out against Sunday closing.

I remember well the following Saturday going to see him and hearing him sadly say he did not know what to do. I told him he must be willing to lose his earthly goods if they stood between him and his obedience to God, and then I read our Saviour's own words from the Gospel of St. Mark, chapter ix. Still the time went on, and nothing seemed done, when again illness put a stop to my work, and the doctor ordered me home. When the day arrived for me to leave, many of the Chinese thronged the staircase and my room. Foremost stood Mrs. Ahok, who had grown to be like a sister to me, and I said—

"Oh, Mrs. Ahok, you have not given your heart to Jesus yet?"

"Yes, I have," she said.

"Ah, but," I replied, "you have not yet confessed Him before men. Oh, I could die for you, my friends, if by my death I could save your never-dying souls. Do, oh! do believe and trust the dear Lord Jesus. I may never meet you again on earth, but

I do want to see you in heaven. Will you not promise to meet me there?"

Sobbings only were heard, until one old woman who had occasionally attended the Bible reading at Mrs. Ahok's came forward and said, "Here, Kuniong, I have brought you my idol; I am going to worship your Jesus now." The idol was black and old, but I kept it for several years, and still possess its head.

After my arrival in England I held many meetings, endeavouring to stir up hearts to send someone to take up this special Zenana work in China.

CHAPTER VIII

Good News from a Far Country

MR. EUGENE STOCK, Editorial Secretary of the C.M.S., listened to all I had to say, and he would so gladly have taken up the work, but at that time the C.M.S. were not sending out ladies. True, they had a few ladies at work, but they had left the ladies' portion to the "Church of England Zenana Missionary Society," and other female societies, so he directed me to the late Sir William Hill, Chairman of the C.E.Z.M.S. I was with him for nearly two hours, and very many times afterwards, and we never consulted together without laying all before God in prayer. There were many difficulties in the way, but He who has promised to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain did so in this case. Very soon the special funds needed for this new departure were sent in — up to this time the C.E.Z.M.S. had only taken up India. The worker also was found, and before long Miss Gough was on her way to China. About this time I received a good many letters from Mr. Ahok and the workers in Foochow. I will quote from Mr. Ahok's own letter first. He had at this time been

baptized while at Hong Kong on business. He says :—

I am happy to tell you that on the 18th of June last my *mother*, *wife*, and *brother*, and *his wife* were baptized, and I hope that they will carry on Christian work to be worthy of true and earnest Christians. My brother's wife had a baby (boy) born a few days after (his mother's) baptism, the mother and baby are both doing very well. I think it is a special gift from God, and I hope the baby may grow up to be the means of doing God's work and a comfort to his parents. I have changed the Thursday meeting (Bible reading) to Friday. I have a meeting at my store every Wednesday (this meeting I have mentioned before), and one at my house on Sundays.

Last Sunday I had a large society (gathering) at my house ; there were about forty present. My store has not been closed on Sunday, because all my partners do not believe in God, and I hope you will pray God to help me in bringing this important matter to a satisfactory ending.

We did pray, and asked all friends in England to do the same ; and the next year, on March 3, I received this news :—

My two stores are closed on Sundays, commencing from the beginning of the Chinese New Year. I continue to have Wednesday meetings at my store, and Friday meetings at my residence, and I hope God will lead me aright. At my family prayers I never omit to pray for you and your husband, and I hope you will often pray for me.

I had been married, and directly afterwards Mr. Ahok always joined my husband's name with mine in his

prayers. I will here insert one of Mr. Ahok's letters, written to me while in Foochow, to show their style :—

FOOCHOW, *3rd March*, 1881.

MY DEAR MISS FOSTER,

Many thanks for your kind note received yesterday.

I beg to inform you that I have bought the books which you ordered me to buy for the members of my family to read.

I have prepared tea for you to take this evening. I shall not be at home this evening, and I am afraid that my family can not stand in ceremony with you.

Should they be wanting of politeness, I hope you will kindly excuse them.

I hope you will be able to go to my house to preach, so that all my family may have comprehension of hearing God's words.

Will you kindly tell Mrs. Ahok that it is her duty to teach all the female relative in my family the doctrine of God, and that she has power of governing them if they do not obey her.

Though I am a master of my family, but I have seldom been at home, and do not know as much as Mrs. Ahok could.

I very much wish that you will kindly tell me which one in my family has paid attention to hear your preaching.

My first and second daughter-in-law are very disobedient to me. When you see them will you kindly ask them what is the reason they do not follow my advice, and oblige

Yours, very truly,

T. AHOK.

And now I will give one of Mrs. Ahok's. These letters are verbatim.

Foochow, *February* 16, 1888.

My dear Mrs. Fagg,

Many thanks for your letter and the book and cards, which you so kindly think of me to send them, and gave me. I am so sorry that I could not write and thank you before this, as I had not time, and learned little English, but I am so thankful and glad that Mrs. Sing is staying with me for the Chinese New Year. She helped me to write this letter to you. I have had very bad sore eyes last month, I could not see or do anything, but very thankful to say that I am so much better now, not quite well yet. I must put on spectacles. I cannot read any letters without them.

This is the Chinese New Year, you are very often in my thoughts, and often think your goodness and kindness to me, and to Charlie when he was very ill you took care and nursed him well. I never forget it. When are you coming back to Foochow again, I should like to see you, hoping you will come here some day for a change if you could. Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Sing, and some of the ladies used to go with me into the city to visit the rich people, and tell them of the great love of God to sinners. They all were very nice, and attentive to hear, but they have not made up their minds to believe. Also we used to visit the houses near my house, and also to Po Na-sang, too, we pray God to open their eyes that they may see Jesus, as their Saviour, who can save them. I hope I shall be able to work again after the Chinese New Year, if nothing happened. I dare say you have heard about my mother, she has been baptized last year. I believe she is a true Christian, she seems quite happy. She sends her love to you, she comes here very often to the prayer meeting, and also to the service on Sundays. She is very often think of you, and should like to see you too. My children—Charlie and Jimmy—go to the Sunday school now every Sundays. I asked a Christian teacher to teach them

last year in my house. They learned the Bible picture book, and they know some of the stories from the 1st to the 30th pictures quite well.

My second daughter-in-law and her husband have been disgraced, and disbehave themselves. I am quite grieved about them. They have gone out from my house, which I am so sorry to say. My second daughter-in-law was very ill last year. She wished to be baptized, and was baptized, but was very sorry what happened with her now. Please will you kindly pray for her and her husband that they may see of their own sins, and come back again to God. If they are humbly to Him He will not turn them away. My eldest daughter-in-law is very hard-hearted, she was exhorted by many friends, and prayed for, but she has not make up her mind to believe in the Lord Jesus as her Saviour, I am very sorry for her, but we pray God to open her eyes, that she may some day come out boldly to confess the Lord Jesus, and trust Him as her Saviour.

Last Conference Misses Newcombe invited me to stay with them for a week; I went to the meeting every day. I walked over with them to go, and to come back six times a day, and I did not feel tired, or hurt my feet at all; I felt quite well and strong, and was much refreshed. I enjoyed it very much. My little boy, Jimmy, went with me too, to stay with the Newcombes; he went to the meeting and heard about giving up wine, so he has given up wine now; he bought a button, which has the Chinese character "Kai-Chin." If anybody invited him to the feast and gave him wine, he would say "No, I have given up wine." I hope he will keep it all the days of his life. I am very sorry to tell you that Mr. Stewart is not well yet. I am afraid if he is not well he will go to England, and we shall be so sorry to lose them. Last March Mr. Ahok went to Singapore, to Hong Kong, to Amoy and Formosa, all about five months. He went to the jail and prison to preach to the heathen

about the Gospel of Christ. While he was in Singapore he had very nice times there. Last night Mr. Ahok started to Hong Kong for some engagements; he said that he would be back in a fortnight. Dr. Corey is going home soon, as she is very ill.

I am going to tell you about the great marriage of the son of the richest man in Formosa to the great granddaughter of the great Mandarin in Foochow, whose grave so many people used to see, near the recreation ground. It is a very beautiful big grave. His great granddaughter married the richest man's son in Formosa. He came to Foochow to be married. It was a very grand wedding. I never saw such a wedding; it was a very crowd of people; thousands of people went to see the bride, whether rich or poor. The bride had to stand on the table, where the people could see her. Some of the chairs and benches broke down on account of the crowd of people who knocked about and made such a rouse; but the head man of the wedding dared not say anything, lest they would make an uproar. Their custom is that any people can go and see. They went to see the bride from 7 to 11 o'clock in the night. The head was very good and patient. He dared not say a word to make the people angry or send them away. About 400 people carried the tablets and the bride's presents, just like they carried procession.

Some of the missionary ladies should like to go and see the bride, but they would not allow it, as they are so afraid that many of the Chinese will come and see too, and will make a rouse again, in case they should get some troubles. They said, before they go back to Formosa, they will come out to my house, and invited some of the ladies to come and see the bride; I wish you were to see her. Last Wednesday the bride's mother-in-law came to wish me a Happy New Year; she will come again before they go away, and stay here on their way to Formosa.

This lady knows about the Bible. She says it is a good doctrine. Some of the Missionaries in Formosa gave her some books and Bible to read. I talked to her about this religion; she seemed very nice about it. The Prayer Meeting on Friday evening held in my house by you, we still keeping it now, and we have it every Friday. The American Church appointed Mr. Sia, one of the Chinese clergymen, to go to America to tell the people there about the work here, so Mr. Sites goes with him to America to translate it for him. The Church appointed Mr. Ahok to go, but he cannot leave his work, so they asked Mr. Sia to go instead of him. I heard you have four daughters; you are quite rich with daughters. Please give my kind regards to Mr. Fagg, and to yourself.

Yours affectionately,

SIA AHOK.

CHAPTER IX

Letters, and Visit to England

I WILL now copy part of Mrs. R. W. Stewart's letter, telling me of the first time Mrs. Ahok spoke in public :—

You would be so rejoiced if you could see Mrs. Ahok now, she is such a decided bright Christian. A short time ago I went to one of the meetings at the Methodist Conference. They had meetings in the morning for women by themselves, and at one of them Mrs. Ahok was asked to tell about the visiting in the city with Miss Gough. I was quite delighted with the way she spoke—so simply, and yet so well and clearly. She told us first of her own conversion, how she was worshipping idols and knew nothing about God, and did not even wish to know Him; but in His great mercy He had sent one of His servants to her to show her the light, and that servant was Miss Foster. She said at first she felt much puzzled at all she heard; but at last the light broke in and she learned to know Christ as her Saviour. Then she felt so afraid and ashamed to confess she was a Christian; but now God had taken all that away, and she never feels either fear or shame, but loves to tell others about the Lord Jesus. Then she went on to tell of her going in the city with Miss Gough and also with me, altogether twelve houses, and of the willingness of the ladies to listen. It was so interesting

hearing her tell it all, and to see her strong desire to see others converted.

Mrs. Stewart has also written a dear little book, entitled *Women's Work in the Fuhkien Province*, and in it she says :—

I wish I could give you, in Mrs. Ahok's own words, her account of this great change in her life as she told it to a small gathering of Chinese women to cheer and encourage them. What I remember of it is as follows :—

"I never thought of God, nor had any desire after Him, but in His great love and mercy He had compassion on me, and sent one of His servants to me to my own home. It was Miss Foster.

"At first I could not understand her message, and my heart was all in darkness, but by and by the light began to shine: it was as you have often seen at sunrise, first a faint light when nothing is seen distinctly, then the sun itself appears, and in a flood of light all is clear.

"So it was in my heart when Christ came in, all my doubts and fears vanished, and I found a joy and peace I never knew before. But my difficulty then was to confess that I was a follower of the Lord Jesus, a member of the despised band of Christians. I felt I would rather die than acknowledge it, and was tempted to think I might worship Christ in secret.

"But this also I took to the Saviour, and told Him my weakness and fear of confessing I was His servant; and" —she concluded, her face beaming with joy—"He took it all away, and I now feel neither fear nor shame, and it is my greatest joy to go to the houses of my rich friends, and plead with them to give up their idols, and find the same peace that I have found in serving Christ."

Mr. Ahok was the first to manifest his anxiety about these rich friends in the city of Foochow, and he invited Miss F. to go with him to visit the ladies. She did so, and was kindly received in many houses, and begged to come again and tell them about the Saviour of whom they had never before heard. But she was not able to make much use of the opportunities thus offered her, for she was soon obliged to leave China on account of ill-health. She had seen enough, however, to convince her that the ground was ready for the seed, if only there were sowers ready to go forth.

The C.E.Z.M.S. were then entreated to extend their pity to the women of China as they had done to "India's Women," and their answer was to send out a lady (Miss Gough), who quickly learned the language, and began to visit the ladies in the city with great energy. Mrs. Ahok accompanied her in these visits, and introduced her to many families of high rank and position. Owing to Miss Gough's teaching and influence, Mrs. Ahok herself also rapidly advanced in knowledge, and became as earnest as her husband in seeking to bring the knowledge of the Gospel to her friends and neighbours.

And the same little book gives a quotation from Miss Bradshaw's letter (she was another C.E.Z.M.S. worker), as follows :—

When in the city on Saturday we had many *invitations* to large houses, which we had been definitely praying for, as Mrs. Ahok said we must wait to be asked before going to large houses. One very rich family had heard of us, and asked to be allowed to come to our house to see us. On Monday we were invaded by seven very grand city ladies, escorted by gentlemen on horseback. They stayed all day; they had *never* heard "The Old, Old Story," and never seen foreigners. Mrs. Ahok

was greatly cheered at such a perfectly new door being opened; she and Chitnio talked turn about, and we had plenty of singing.

Then there follows a letter from Mrs. Ahok :—

My mother-in-law died last year in August, as you have heard, and while I was in mourning Chinese custom would not allow me to go among the higher class of people in the city; they would not like it, and it would hurt their feelings; but I have been once into the city with Miss Davies to see the ladies you used to call upon with me. Their tribe is Ling; they were inquiring about you; I hope soon to go among these people again in the city. I often go to the houses near my house. Yesterday Mrs. Ling (Chitnio) and I went to visit some people; they were very nice, and quite interested in what we told them about this Doctrine; several of them asked us to come again, so we are going this afternoon. Once a week I have Prayer Meetings at the Hospital with the sick women there. We pray God to bless the words that have been spoken that they may bring forth fruit to His glory. My mother is quite happy since she became a Christian, she lives next door to me, and it is easy for her to come to me when she likes. My nephew's family also know the Doctrine very well, only they have not come out, but some of them come to the Prayer Meetings very often. I hope that before long they may come out and confess Christ before all men.

Subsequently I received a letter from Miss Ada Nisbet, of Hobart, telling me that Miss Bradshaw had been ordered home and that she had asked Mrs. Ahok if she would go to England with her to plead for workers. The request was made on a Monday, and Mr. Ahok,

feeling his own inability to go either to America or Europe to plead for workers, gave his wife for this work, and on the Wednesday she was ready to start. In three days she had consented and made all necessary preparations. I will forbear commenting on this, as her own speeches delivered in London and elsewhere, which we insert later on, will speak for themselves.

Lady Beaujolais Dent writes of this visit as follows :—

The Chinese lady, Mrs. Ahok, is actually now in this country. After passing through London, she is to be for a while in Dublin with the Lady Missionary who escorted her from China, and in May next she will appear (D.V.) at the Annual Meeting of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society to be held at Prince's Hall, Piccadilly.

To leave her own country and travel the long and trying voyage is an unprecedented step for a Chinese lady, and was greatly opposed by Mrs. Ahok's heathen friends and acquaintances, who augured all sorts of evil as sure to result from it, but her husband, who is as earnest a Christian as herself, gave his full sanction, knowing that the sole motive that actuates her is her intensely eager longing to induce more English ladies to go out as missionaries to teach those of her own rank in China who are willing to listen to the Gospel.

Anyone who hears Mrs. Ahok's pathetic pleading in broken English cannot but be touched, and all who have at heart the extension of Christ's Kingdom will surely join in pleading that this longing, prayerful desire of her heart may be granted, that those who are *able* may likewise be *willing* to respond to her call, which we believe to be the call of God through His child,

whom He has already so greatly honoured, in answer to prayer, and that those who cannot go will give all they can to meet the expenses of those who are willing to give themselves for work in that interesting portion of the vineyard.—April 1890.

We insert two items from the daily papers, choosing these short ones to avoid repetition :—

The visit of the Chinese lady to Dublin, of whom we gave a sketch last week, has resulted in deepening the interest in Chinese missions. Rev. Mr. Bradshaw, with whose daughter the visitor came from China, has received a letter from a lady offering to devote her life to work in China; another has sent a remittance of £25 in aid of the hospital at Foochow.

The various religious meetings have been well attended. The Metropolitan Hall was filled at the annual meeting of the Church Missionary Society. The Bishop of Ossory presided. The Chinese lady, the wife of the Mandarin of Foochow, who is at present staying at the Rectory, Clontarf, occupied a seat on the platform close to the Bishop, and gave a short address in Chinese, which was translated by Miss Bradshaw. Also "Mrs. Ahok" (if we may thus describe her for the sake of convenience) sang a hymn, "Jesus loves me," in Chinese, and requested the audience to join in the chorus. The effect was most striking and impressive. The London C.M.S. Committee should invite her to attend the great Exeter Hall meeting. "Mrs. Ahok," who has a very pleasing, intelligent face, earnestly pleaded for more workers for China.

We give a copy of her speech made at Prince's Hall, London, taken from *India's Women* :—

Mrs. Ahok addressed the meeting in Chinese, which was rapidly interpreted by Mrs. Stewart:—

"I have just remembered that this is the 21st day of the Chinese month, so that is exactly two months to-day since I landed in England, and I am very happy to have this opportunity of speaking to so many people. I have not understood all that has been said while I have been sitting here, only that the gentlemen were speaking of India, and now I wish to say a few words about China.

"Since I have been here, what has struck me more than anything is that the women of England have such wonderful blessings from God. I see them go out, even at night, and I think they must be very strong. As I see the blessings that they here enjoy, it makes my heart still more pity China. I am very anxious to tell you something about my countrywomen. Many here may know it already, but I should like to remind those who do not, that in China there is the cruel custom of binding women's feet, and it makes it almost impossible for them to leave their own houses or to walk out of doors. I myself have bound feet, and it is extremely difficult for me to move about. You may ask how was I able to come to England? It is solely trusting in God's great power. I have heard some people say that I am come to England for pleasure; but I do not think there can be much pleasure in coming as I have done. That long journey alone is enough to make one cry. My one thought is to get back to my own country as quickly as I can, after doing the duty which God has called me to do. Since I have been here these two months, I have never once been out for my own amusement; but every day I have had some opportunity of speaking to people about the needs of the Chinese women, and that is all my heart desires.

"One thing specially fills my heart with pity as I think

of my sisters in China—the time of their death. I have myself been with those who were passing out of this life into unknown darkness; they murmur that they see evil spirits coming for them, and say, 'I see this and that other spirit,' so that one attendant dare not stay in the room alone with them; there must be five or six people. They say the evil spirits are filling the room, and coming to take away that poor soul. Sometimes as the watchers beside the dying hear the cry of an owl, of which they have great fear in China, they think it is a messenger from the other world, calling the soul of the departing one.

"The reason of this terrible dread and anguish of mind is that they do not know the love of God, but worship evil spirits. Many of them, when they are very, very ill indeed, do not ask the doctor to give them medicine, but send and inquire at the idol temples what medicine should be taken. If a man is very ill indeed, they send to the great temple of Foochow, and pray to seven or eight idols for his recovery. These things ought to fill your hearts with compassion.

"I will not now tell you about the customs of China, because you have heard what is done in India, and, as far as I can tell, the women are treated in much the same way. I see so many people to-day all worshipping and loving the same God, and it fills my heart with sorrow when I think of my city, Foochow; very few women there have heard God's Name, because there are so few to teach them. These Chinese ladies will not allow a Chinese man to go and tell them about God and about the Saviour; they could not listen to a man, but if you ask them if a foreign lady from England may come, they say, 'We will gladly hear her speak.' I have just heard that more than one hundred ladies of this Society have gone to India, and are working there, and now I hope that quite as many will go to China.

"I should like you to remember that women in China are going to ruin; it is a matter of life and death. I ask you to go and save them. I am thankful that some ladies have gone already to China in connection with this Society. I know the two Misses Newcombe well, but they have moved to Kucheng, 120 miles from Foochow, where they have more work than they can do. Some more ladies went to Shanghai and another to Fu-Ning, so that only leaves Miss Davies for this great city with thousands and thousands of women. How can these workers be enough? I hope many present to-day will soon go out and help Miss Davies, and these poor Chinese ladies, who are like lost sheep, with no one to care for them.

"I will give a few words of my own experience. Some years ago I worshipped idols, just as these women do now, and seemed to be quite under the power of the idols; but now, thanks to God's great mercy, He has delivered me. My husband's mother, who had also become a Christian, died about two years ago; her death was perfect peace, so different from what I told you just now of the heathen's deathbed. As we sat in the room with her, we asked whether she was afraid, and her answer was, 'It is all peace,' and so she passed away to be with her Saviour. If Miss Foster had not come to teach me, I should be just as much in darkness as any of my people, and now I want some of you to come out and teach them. Will you have patience while I read you some verses out of the Bible? (St. Matt. ix. 36–38.)

"Our Saviour had compassion on the people who fainted and were as sheep not having a shepherd. It is the same now as He looks on the people of China. He sees that the harvest is plenteous. When a cornfield is ripe, if many labourers gather it at once, it may be all safely housed in a few days; but if they wait and let it stand three or four years

it may all be spoilt. I would remind you of one other verse, which was spoken of at a meeting yesterday. It is in St. Mark. Our Lord, before He left this world, said to His disciples, 'Go ye into *all* the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.' "

MRS. AHOK AND HER SERVANT.

CHAPTER X

Opinions of the Press and Others

A LADY who heard Mrs. Ahok address a large meeting in the Hampstead Town Hall says that never had she seen such eagerness to get seats at a missionary meeting. The hall was packed, gentlemen stood during the meeting, and many were turned from the doors unable to find even standing room. Great was the excitement and interest shown when Mrs. Ahok appeared in her brilliant Chinese dress leaning on the arm of her heathen servant, and all listened in breathless silence while she explained simply and pathetically the reason why she must beg leave to give her address seated—that her tiny crippled feet were a source of constant pain. Mrs. Ahok was evidently an intelligent and observant woman, notwithstanding the close confinement that custom enforces on all Chinese ladies of rank, and the fact that she had never been three miles from her husband's house.

She was passing a large gasometer in the suburbs, and inquired what it was. Her English friend explained that it was a reservoir of gas for lighting the London streets. Then she wished to know how it was got out of this reservoir to the lamps. She was told it was by

means of many pipes laid along the roads. "Oh, my dear friends," she said, "is not England like this gasometer, a big reservoir of Gospel light, and my people are perishing in the dark in far-away China. Cannot you do for God's light what you do with your gas; lay it on to those distant places and let them also rejoice in that light that you have so plentifully in this England so favoured by God?"

We give a report of one of her meetings held in Dublin, copied from the *Young Women's Christian Association Monthly Journal* (July 1890):—

Many of our country Secretaries will regret to learn that Mrs. Ahok's visit is terminating without their having had the stimulus of a visit and address from her. The last evening in Ireland was spent at the Central Institute, 75 Harcourt Street, and feeling sure that Secretaries will like to tell their Members as much as possible of our Chinese sister, we give a short account of this meeting, and also notes of her address.

Such a crowd of Institute Members and their friends assembled—many of whom had collected for years in their various classes "for China"—that an overflow meeting had at once to be arranged in the dining-room, where, seated on tables and forms, about fifty listened to such a graphic description of Chinese customs, that more than one felt Miss Coulson spoke as if she had been out herself, so deeply may a distant land be laid on our hearts. There must have been nearly three hundred in the drawing-room, the desire being so great of those who could not attend meetings in the daytime, to see and hear their Chinese sister.

Mrs. Ahok sang in Chinese, "Happy Day," and all joined in the chorus. Then Miss Bradshaw spoke of some of the phases of Chinese life, and introduced Mrs. Ahok, who said:—

"I invite you to look at the Acts of the Apostles, chaps. ix. 6 and xxii. 21. Paul, before he had received the Holy Spirit's influence, persecuted the Church and the Lord's disciples; afterwards he was changed by the Holy Spirit and was very energetic in teaching many Christians. This is plainly stated in the Bible, you all know it already. Paul was trembling and said, 'Lord, Thou dost wish me to do *what*?' The Lord afterwards said (chap. xxii. 21), 'Go forth, I will cause you to go *very* far away to teach the heathen.' Paul's words and the Bible words are at *this* time spoken to *us all*. But look at this time at other countries. There are very many people who do not yet know how to worship God, because they have not at all yet heard the Lord's Gospel, they all worship false gods, images and idols.

"Now we all have first received grace from the Lord, we must also obey God's words, and go and save those who do not believe in Him. Men and women though very far away are created by your God, too, and you see Scripture has said, 'He sends rain, giving it to the good men and also the bad men. He causeth the sun to come out on the righteous people and also on the unrighteous people.' God is righteous, not making any choice, but the same to *all* people. Therefore we must learn from the Lord's example, and pity the hearts of *all* people. Now *we* also must go to save the people in other countries, who have not now at all heard that Jesus has come to the world, and has suffered death for the world of people.

"Paul has said, 'to believe they must hear.' Now I have come such a long road, it is that I want to tell you their needs. This time of the year the warm weather is arriving in China, and they are putting forth all their strength to parade Buddhist idols through all the streets. All the people have to give much money for their use and clothing. They are beseeching the idols to protect their households, and give them long lives,

and not to let them have sickness or pain, and to let them have peace. In the second and third months of their year they have the festivals of the Tombs; every household of men go to sacrifice—that is, to buy gold paper and silver paper, and go to the graves on the hills to sacrifice on their relations' graves. The women serve the goddesses day and night. They think they can give them children, and therefore they worship them and burn incense before them. I also used to do quite the same, but afterwards I received God's Gospel and threw away all such idols and images, and came to worship God.

"Therefore that is why I have come to this place to tell you the worshipping of idols is so very harmful. There is much more, I could never tell *all*, only a little for you to hear. When I talk so much about the worshipping-idols-business in my country, it is only from their not having heard God's Gospel that they are in this state.

"I greatly desire you all to obey God's commandments, and to go to other nations and teach them to worship God, that the idols are false, and that they may receive God's salvation. Jesus says that there are other nations who are not yet in His fold (John x. 16), and He wants you to lead them to come to Him. I think we all must obey the Lord's words to go and lead them to come, and when with them say, 'God has also grace for *you*; it is because you do not know God that you worship these idols.' We *must* go and plead with them, and lead them to the fold. For if we do not go and tell them, they will *never* know or understand what it is to repent of their sins, or how they can worship God. I think the words of the Bible are commands to *all* of us. It does not matter what country, what nation of men, *all* are created by the same God; but the other countries do not know at all that God's grace is for them, just because no one has been to tell them, therefore they worship false gods and have strayed *very* far from God.

"I would like to make you listen to some of the customs of China, the worst is the idol worship. If a person is ill they burn incense and invite the principal spirit, invoking the gods and idols to cause him to be well. Do you think this is sad or not? Because you have never told them the Gospel they are on the road of pitch darkness. Now we must quickly, quickly go and save them, and make them turn round and come and belong to the fold. Another thing, if they have no daughters this is of no importance, but if they have no sons this is *most* important, because they are afraid that when they grow old or die there will be no one to honour and worship their ancestral tablets. The women bind their daughters' feet to cause them to be beautiful. Then when they become brides so many people look at them and say, 'Ah, how can their mothers have made their feet so small?' But if their feet are at all longer than the right size, the mothers are blamed and said they have not governed their children, and they are laughed at. Therefore, the mothers *have* to do it to them.

"You ought very much to pity the other countries whose customs are so hurtful. I cannot come to an end of telling you, but if you do not obey the words of God the blame rests on you. I am free from it."

While Mrs. Ahok was resting, Miss Bradshaw gave a further description of Chinese life and customs, and told many sad facts which stirred all present, as we felt how God's light was needed in that dark land. Do we all *know* that every third person in the world is a Chinese? *That if the population of China marched past in single file, it would take twenty-three and a half years for all to pass, and only two and a half days for those who have received the Gospel of Christ? 36,000 in China die daily. What are we doing to tell them of the Saviour before they go down to a Christless grave?*

And now we will give what the *Church Missionary Gleaner* (October 1890) says. The portrait mentioned forms the frontispiece to the present volume.

Readers of the *Gleaner*, especially those who were privileged to see and hear Mrs. Ahok when in England this year, will be glad to see the portrait on this page. It will be remembered that Mrs. Ahok, who is the wife of the Christian merchant at Foochow who has done so much philanthropically and spiritually for the welfare of his countrymen in that city (see *Gleaner*, February 1883), was brought to a knowledge of the truth under the teaching of Miss Foster (now Mrs. Fagg, of South Africa, formerly of Tasmania), and since her conversion has worked as nobly among Chinese women as her husband has among the men.

In the spring of this year she came to England with Miss C. Bradshaw, a missionary of the Church of England Zenana Society, to stir up interest among Christian ladies in her Chinese sisters, and for several months she travelled much and spoke in various places in England and Ireland. About one hundred meetings were addressed by her, Mrs. Stewart, wife of the Rev. R. W. Stewart, of the C.M.S. Mission at Foochow, acting as an able interpreter. Mrs. Ahok is said to be the first Christian Chinese lady to visit this country.

In the July number of *India's Women*, the magazine of the Church of England Zenana Society, a literal translation is printed of Mrs. Ahok's own statement of her object in coming to England:—

"TO MY SISTERS IN ENGLAND.

"I have come from China—from Foochow—and come to England for what business and what purpose? The road here was *very* difficult, sitting in a boat for so long! Very tiresome it was, to be on the rough sea, with wind and waves for the first time!

"My servant (Dion Chio) and I have come here. We are strangers! We raise our eyes and look on people's faces, but we can see no one we know—no relative, no one like ourselves—all truly strange! I left my little boy, my husband, my mother—all this: for what purpose do you think? *It is only entirely for the sake of Christ's Gospel I have come.*

"It is not for the sake of seeing a new place and new people or any beautiful thing; we have in China quite close to us new places—beautiful places. I have never seen *them* yet, so why should I come so far to see other places? They may be very good to see, but not for this could I leave my household and people. I cannot speak your words; I do not know anyone, and your food is quite different from ours: nothing is at all the same as that to which I am accustomed.

"You in England sometimes come to China, but often you have one or two fellow-missionaries from your own country; but here I know not one fellow-countryman. Then for what reason have I come? It is only to obey God's Holy Spirit. When the *kuniong* (missionary lady) suggested it, I knew God wanted me to follow Him, and that He would use me. So I trusted Him, and had no doubts or any fear. It was God's Holy Spirit that led me to come. He wanted me to do what? Not to amuse *myself*, but to ask and invite *you* to come to China to tell the doctrine of Christ. How could you know the needs of China without hearing them? How could you hear unless I came to tell you? Now you can know, for I say the harvest in China is *very* great, but the labourers are *so* few.

"Now my great desire is that the Gospel of Christ may be known on earth as it is in heaven. It is not yet known in China, and because the great houses have not yet heard the Gospel, all their money is spent on the idols, sacrifices, and burning incense.

"In this country *some* help to spread the Gospel, *some* go to other countries to tell those who have never heard, but some (a great many) are not helping in any way: though they have all heard themselves, they are living here only to obey their own wills, for their own pleasure, in this world! How pitiable! We all know the Gospel of Christ; let us then not follow the heathen (who have never heard) in caring for the things of this world. The Bible says: 'If a man receives all the riches of this world, and loses his own soul' (and the soul of many others), 'what can it profit him?'

"I left China to come to England; it is only in obedience to God's command, to show that Christ loves the whole world, that He wants you to follow Him, in living for those who cannot yet believe in Him, because they have not yet heard of Him. I am only here for a very little, then I must go back to Foochow, where there are *so* many large houses full of ladies; the workers are so very few now. At this time only one *kuniong* (Miss Davies) is there to visit all the great city houses. She is not enough to visit so very many; and it is said that in these Mandarin houses their ears have never yet heard the doctrine.

"*The ladies all have tiny feet; they cannot walk; besides, the customs are so strict and so hurtful, they are not allowed to see guests. So missionaries are still outside their doors; they cannot enter the women's part of the houses, therefore they have never heard the happy sound of the Gospel of Christ, and they are truly pitiable.*

"Now I pray God to cause, whether *kuniongs* (unmarried ladies), or *sing-sang-niongs* (married ladies), *quickly* to go and enter these houses with the Gospel.

"Now I ask you, raise up hot hearts in yourselves and quickly help us:—

"1st. Will you come back to China with me?

"2nd. If *you* cannot, will you cause others to come, by sending them and doing what you can to help them to come?

"Diong Ahok."

On June 26th Mrs. Ahok left London for her native home. She was accompanied by Miss Mead, the first-fruit of her appeal for Christian workers. We commend Mrs. Ahok and her work to the prayers of all who long for the spread of Christ's truth.

CHAPTER XI

"With Christ, which is Far Better"

WE in Tasmania were praying daily for Mrs. Ahok, but hardly once thought of the husband whom she had left behind, until a letter arrived from China, telling of his visit to Formosa on business, and subsequent illness. Letters followed letters in quick succession, and told of much prayer being offered to God to spare his life until his wife's return. Increasing weakness warned all friends of danger, and they asked to be allowed to summon his wife home. "No," he answered, "God called her to that work, and when it is done He will send her home."

Mrs. Ahok had arranged to leave England on the 1st of July, but hearing of her husband's illness, she hastened her departure, and fearing the heat of the Red Sea, she returned *via* America, accompanied by Miss Mead, a lady of the C.E.Z.M.S., going out for the first time. Friends in Foochow did not know of her departure, but the Rev. S. Lloyd had sent a cablegram to ask her to return at once, when he found that she had already started on her homeward journey. Eagerly did the friends in Foochow watch all tidings of the vessel, which was due to arrive on the 10th of August;

all that day they watched around Mr. Ahok's bedside, and towards evening hope deferred was making their hearts sick, when a cablegram arrived with the news that the vessel had been delayed at Vancouver Island, and would not be in for a fortnight.

The next day the summons came, and dear Mr. Ahok was called to "be with Christ, which is far better." There was a funeral service at the house, and another at the church; then the body was left screwed down in the coffin until his wife's return.

We will now insert two letters—one from Miss Bradshaw, and the other from Mrs. Ling (Chitnio)—which appeared in *India's Women* for November and December, 1890:—

Ireland, *September 23rd*, 1890.—The sad news came last night of dear Mr. Ahok's being taken home. I enclose a copy of a letter from one of the Chinese who was with him just before his death. My heart aches for dear Mrs. Ahok. I shall never forget the bright way in which Mr. Ahok faced all the dangers and difficulties of the journey upon which he was sending Mrs. Ahok. As he said good-bye at the Anchorage, he said he did it gladly for the sake of getting more workers for China. May his death be a loud call for us each to do, as faithfully as he did, what we can for the same end. May we pray earnestly for the heathen, who are saying, "Where is now their God?" and for Mrs. Ahok, that grace, wisdom, and power may be given to her in answering them. and that they may see "perfect peace" personified in her.

Two more weeks, I fear, before we can hear of her arrival; and then to think of her only seeing the coffin! Will you join me in praying specially for those wicked relatives who

have taken all that should be hers? May she be given Christ's love and patience through all!

Letter from Mrs. Ling (the devoted teacher Chitnio) to Miss C. Bradshaw.

August 1st, 1890.—I am sure you must have heard by this time that Mr. Ahok is very ill indeed. We are all praying day and night, that if it is God's will to restore his health and strength, he may again work for the Chinese in Foochow; if not, we ask God to spare his life until Mrs. Ahok's return.

Mr. Ahok is very anxious to see Mrs. Ahok. He says if God would call him he is very glad, but he wishes for Mrs. Ahok to be here. I went to see him often, and prayed with him sometimes—he always seems so pleased to see me. It seems so strange for Mrs. Ahok to go to England, and Mr. Ahok to be here so ill. There must be some reason. "All things work together for good to them that love God," as you said in your letter. "He doeth all things well." "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

August 9th.—I saw Mr. Ahok this afternoon. He is *very ill.* I am afraid he will not live till Mrs. Ahok comes back. We expect her in four or five days. He is so weak—quite changed—you would not have known him. I could not say much to him. I asked him, "Is your heart at peace?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Be anxious for nothing." He said, "No, it is the will of God." I said, "The Lord Jesus is always with you, even to the end. He will bring you up to the heavenly home above, where He has prepared a place for you, free from all sorrow, sickness, and pain—would you like that?" He said, "Yes, I like it very much."

I also asked him if he had any messages for Mrs. Ahok. He said, "No, I leave her to God." Then he added, "You

had better go home now, because it will be too dark for you. The Lord is always with you, and He is with me too."

Let us pray very much for Mrs. Ahok, that she may be comforted and strengthened, and see that God's loving hand has done this, that she may not be cast down or discouraged, but that she may say, "Thy will be done."

August 15th.—I am going to tell you what you will not be surprised to hear after my last letter about Mr. Ahok. He is safe with Jesus now; free from all sorrows, pain, sickness, and trouble; he is most joyful in the presence of his Saviour, who loved him and washed him in the Blood of the Lamb. No more troubles now; poor man, he had had so many.

He was so quiet all the time he was ill; he never said anything about his money or his children, but often asked when Mrs. Ahok would come back. He fell asleep on August 11th, in the evening. It is a great loss to us, and to all the Chinese. It seems so strange. We do not understand yet what the will of the Lord is, but we may trust Him: He is faithful.

I wish you were here now that I might talk to you. I feel Mr. Ahok's loss very much. He was so good and kind —like a father to me. 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

We now give what the *Christian* (October 3, 1890) says about Mrs. Ahok:—

This week we introduce to notice a Chinese lady who, for Christian devotion and strength of purpose, deserves to be held in high honour in the Church of Christ. That a lady of rank in the million-peopled empire should confess Christ and serve Him among her idolatrous neighbours is a notable thing; that out of a yearning desire for the salvation of her people she should make a journey to Europe, and beg those who fear God to send, without delay, other heralds of th

light of life, is more remarkable still. Such a lady, however, is the subject of our present sketch.

Mrs. Ahok is the wife of a Mandarin who has just fallen asleep at Foochow. Brought up in heathen darkness and superstition, they early knew what it is to serve false gods. Ten years ago, however, they came to a knowledge of Christ. *The first English lady who spoke to Mrs. Ahok was Miss Foster of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East.*[1] The Mandarin desired his wife to learn something of the English language, and, after hesitation, it was arranged that Miss Foster should give her instruction, notwithstanding the fact, at first unpleasant, that the Bible was one of the books to be read. When Miss Foster could not give the lessons Mrs. R. W. Stewart, of the Church Missionary Society, did so. The Chinese lady showed, for a time, the same firm attachment as formerly to the idols which filled her house, and the missionaries were tempted to despair of Divine truth ever finding a lodgment in her heart. Light comes from God, however, and when the day of Divine enlightenment arrived, the darkness rolled from the lady's mind, and all was "light in the Lord." Having confessed Christ, Mrs. Ahok became, to the utmost of her power, a home missionary among her people. For some years she has visited the city of Foochow, and has introduced English missionaries into the households of many rich Mandarins, where otherwise they could not possibly have obtained entrance. Her husband, until his death in August last, was one with her in heart and soul, and, as well as working himself, did much to facilitate Mrs. Ahok's labours for the Lord.

Women of the higher social classes in China are, as is well

[1] This Society is no longer in existence, its work having been taken over by the C.M.S. and the C.E.Z.M.S.

known, in a very sad case. Their crippled little feet render them to a large extent prisoners in their houses; custom and gnorance do much to make their lives tedious and miserable. Life has no serious purpose with them, so that their days are passed in trivial occupations and unprofitable entertainment. Mrs. Ahok had grace given her to rise above these sad surroundings, and though her tiny feet made travelling burdensome, and the confinement of her past life fostered fear and timidity, she boldly responded to the call of duty, and, as already intimated, came to England to give emphatic expression to her heart's prayer, "Come over and help us." She had never before been more than three miles away from her home, yet she did not quail before a journey of several thousand miles. She is the first Chinese Christian lady who has ever visited Europe on such an errand.

Early in the present year Miss Bradshaw, of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, came home to England to recruit her health. Mr. Ahok had for some time been burdened with a desire to visit England or America in order to impress upon Christian people the need of more missionaries. So he proposed to his wife to accompany Miss Brahshaw, and in two days the brave little lady had made up her mind to come and plead with the women of England to have mercy upon the women of China. She said: "I cannot think why more Christians do not come to China; it must be because they do not know how our women are dying." At Mildmay Conference in June last, Mrs. Ahok admirably formulated the appeal which she delivered on many platforms in the United Kingdom, as follows:—

"Suppose our Lord had said He loved this world, but had never left heaven to lay down His life for us, would His pity have done us any good? We should have been without hope. But Christ gave the greatest proof of His love by coming and

laying down His life for us. So when we say by our lips that we know Him, we should give proof by our lives that what we say is true."

She had not come all this way from home and country for pleasure or amusement. She was sitting in her house in quietness and peace, and thought of the coming of the Lord. She felt she dare not meet Him, and look in His face, having herself known the Saviour's love and pity, without having done anything for the salvation of her brothers and sisters in China. She asked Christians to give themselves for work in China. There is a Chinese proverb, "While the stone is hot, put the cakes on"; so she begged her hearers to make no delay in putting their resolves into execution.

Needless to say, these earnest words were listened to with rapt attention. At nearly a hundred meetings the appeal was presented, being interpreted from Chinese by Mrs. Stewart. Being, as already stated, a victim of the foot-binding custom of her country, Mrs. Ahok had to endure much during her travels. At the annual meeting of the C.E.Z.M.S. she referred to the difficulties of the way as follows:—

"I have heard some people say that I have come to England for pleasure. I do not think there can be any pleasure in coming as I have done. That long journey alone is enough to make one cry. My one thought is to get back to my own country as quickly as I can, after doing the duty which God has called me to do."

There was holy daring in the undertaking. At Hong Kong Mrs. Ahok was told, in the language of the people, "There are a thousand miseries before you." Her reply was: "If there are a thousand more, I will go." She came, and endured many hardships, deriving strength and comfort from the words of Christ: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me. If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

The pity of the audiences that listened to Mrs. Ahok was always stirred by her references to the sad deaths of the women of China. As in India, females are unwelcome at their birth and despised in their life. When death comes, however, their experiences are grievous in the extreme. Mrs. Ahok said:—

"Some years ago I worshipped idols, just as these poor women do. I seemed to be quite under the power of the idols; but now, thanks be to God, I am delivered. My husband's mother, who had also become a Christian, died about two years ago. Her death was perfect peace, so different from the death of the heathen. As we sat in the room with her, we asked whether she was afraid, and her answer was, 'It is all peace.' And so she passed away to be with the Saviour. If Miss Foster had not come to teach me, I should have been in as deep darkness as any of my people. So I want some of you to come out and teach them."

During four months Mrs. Ahok pleaded the cause of her sisters. She told us that Miss Davies was alone in Foochow —a great city surrounded by many smaller places, with hundreds of thousands of women. When once the attention of these benighted people is arrested, it is surprising to notice their experiences in heart and mind. To think that God loves them is at first quite ridiculous. Becoming reassured, however, they are amazed at the story of the Cross, and among those who have confessed Christ are some of whom Mrs. Ahok is a very worthy representative; they are earnest and devoted followers of the Lord that bought them.

Our Chinese friend was a most interesting guest wherever she went in Great Britain and Ireland. She enforced her appeal by one sentence spoken in excellent English, namely, "Come over and help us; it is very important." How the words did touch many who heard them! We cannot say that many

responded. We trust some will yet cheer her heart and "go over." Mrs. Ahok left England for China *via* America, June 27. One English lady, Miss Florence Mead, sailed with her, giving her life to missionary work. We may fittingly conclude our sketch with words taken from *Region Beyond* for August: "*A thousand Miss Meads are wanted! At least a thousand such, if China's women are to be reached in this generation.*"

Mrs. Ahok's return home was precipitated by intelligence of the serious illness of her husband. She did not arrive at Foochow until several days after his death. We sincerely trust that, resigned to the dispensations of Providence, Mrs. Ahok will find her path lightened before her with a brightness shining "more and more unto the perfect day."

There is a custom prevailing in the Southern part of China that no bad news may be told unto the absent ones until they arrive on the threshold of their own doors. Not until then do they know that sorrow awaits them in any way; consequently when Mrs Ahok was met in Hong Kong by her Chinese friends they never told her of her sad loss. So on she went, full of joy at nearing home—full of thankfulness for what God had done for her and by her, having with her the first-fruits of her pleadings, Miss Mead, before mentioned, and other friends. She was nearing the deepest sorrow any woman can be called upon to bear on earth with a joyous heart. Alas! how little any of us know what the next hour will bring!

She arrived at the Pagoda Anchorage at the mouth of the River Min. Her husband's houseboat was sent down to await her arrival, and Dr. Sites, the

American missionary mentioned before, was among her friends. Mrs. Ahok was so glad to see them all, and to tell how the Lord alone had led her all the time she had been absent. Dr. Sites knew not what to do; he felt unable for his task. They got into the houseboat, and were being slowly rowed down the river, and all the time Mrs. Ahok chatted on. Towards sunset Dr. Sites, feeling that it would be terrible for her to get home and be met at her own door by all her family in sackcloth, suggested that they should have evening worship. She agreed, and they sang the hymn—

"There'll be no more sorrow there,
In Heaven above, where all is love,
There'll be no more sorrow there."

Then he read Rev. xxii., and prayed, asking for grace to tell the dreadful truth, and also that Mrs. Ahok might have preparedness of heart to receive all he had to disclose. Then they arose from their knees, and he told her—oh, it was sad to see her!—such a crushing blow when she was so joyfully looking forward to the speedy meeting once more. She was carried to her home, and many of her heathen friends and relations began exclaiming against her God, whom she served and who, they said, treated her so badly. When our missionary ladies went in to see her, she was seated in a rocking-chair, swaying herself to and fro, weeping quietly. She could not speak, so they just stood round her, singing comforting hymns, and repeating comforting words of Scripture, and praying for her.

Two letters which appeared in *India's Women* for January 1891 are given here: a literal translation of her own words may be of interest.

Vancouver, *July* 26, 1890.

All well, all peace. From the time I left England a month has passed away. I keep thinking continually of the meetings in England, which we had together.

Now we are in this place, waiting for the ship, and therefore we had this very good opportunity for work. I have been invited by the minister of the Church here to speak at meetings. I have done so six times. Because this is a new place, and there are men and women who do not at all believe the Gospel, but who like to hear about Chinese ways and customs, therefore they all greatly wish me to go to these meetings. I think this also is God's leading for us, that we could not proceed on our journey, but must spend this time here; I greatly thank the Lord for His goodness.

The Church here is a newly established one, yet it greatly helps China.

We also thank God for sending to us one gentleman to help us. He formerly was in China, and sold Bibles and preached the Gospel at Foochow and all the places round about; he says, too, that he knew Mr. Stewart and Mr. Lloyd there. He can speak Chinese, and has been a great help to us. I think this is a wonderful thing; man thinking cannot foresee, only God can arrange what work we ought to do.

Now I ask you to pray for this place, that the Church here may extend rapidly, and may help China.

To-day is Saturday; this afternoon at 3.30 we are to have another meeting; to-morrow, Sunday, we go on board ship to return to China.

There is an American gentleman going to Foochow with his

family, to be Consul there; they are worshippers of God. He has been in America preaching the Gospel for thirty-one years; they are going in the ship with us now to Foochow. Dr. Baldwin had told him of my visit to England; I thank God for this good opportunity of returning to Foochow with him.

When you have an opportunity, give my greeting to all my Christian friends.

Mr. Ahok's loss will be greatly felt by the Chinese Christians, and of his death we can only say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to Him good." "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Miss Florence Mead writes of her safe arrival with Mrs. Ahok at Foochow, on September 6. She continues:—

The news was kept from poor Mrs. Ahok till she was in the houseboat, which met the steamer at the Anchorage, to take her up to Foochow. Her brother, her nephew, and Dr. Sites met her; the latter knows her very well indeed. The news was broken to her about half-way up. (I was in the steam launch.) It seemed almost God's ordering that none but the most immediate friends and Dr. Sites were with her at the painful moment. She sat like a statue for some time, then utterly broke down. A most painful time ensued when she reached the house, the friends wailing round her. Fortunately Chitnio, the Bible-woman, was there.

Yesterday afternoon I went with three of the ladies here to see her. The expression on her face was altered, and, according to custom, she was very shabbily dressed. Her jewels were taken off. She keeps saying, "If I could only see him once more, and tell him all I have done in England."

She sobbed for some time; then I proposed singing a hymn softly to her, and after a time she became more composed and tried to talk a little, telling Miss Davies in Chinese to tell me she would have had a room prepared for me if this had not happened. Mr. Ahok is not yet buried, and I think some time will elapse first.

MRS. AHOK; THE PRAYED-FOR SON ON HER RIGHT WITH HIS WIFE; THE ADOPTED SON ON HER LEFT WITH HIS WIFE; AND THEIR RESPECTIVE CHILDREN. SERVANTS AT THE BACK.

CHAPTER XII

Sympathy

THE following letter, signed by nearly five hundred friends of the C.M.S. and C.E.Z.M.S., was sent to Mrs. Ahok :—

To Mrs. Ahok.

Dear Sister in Christ,—We write to tell you that our hearts are full of sorrow for you since we heard of the great trial with which it has pleased our Heavenly Father to visit you.

We have prayed, and will pray, that our God, who is "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort," will comfort you and be a God to you and a Father to your fatherless son.

Thank God! you need not "sorrow as others who have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again," we know that "them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Your dead husband lived and died in the faith of Jesus Christ.

He is "not dead, but sleepeth"; "absent from the body," he is "present with the Lord."

We are sure that this which has happened will not be allowed to hinder the Gospel. In some way which we cannot now see it will be "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

We bless God for your coming to England. We have learned to know and love you. Your words are not forgotten. The seed God enabled you to sow is already bearing some fruit, and will, we believe, bring forth much more. One sister has gone with you; we send this by the hands of three more. We know others who were led by your words to offer themselves for Christ's work in China. Two of these are now being trained for the mission field. This will cheer your heart.

These words are sent, with much Christian sympathy and many prayers, by your affectionate sisters in Christ.

We will give here a letter, written by the Rev. R. W. Stewart, which appeared in the *Christian* (October 10, 1890):—

Rev. R. W. Stewart, C.M.S., whose wife interpreted for Mrs. Ahok when in England, writes to us:—

"Many will be grieved to hear that this lady, who hastened back to China to her sick husband, did not arrive in time to see him again in this world. The last mail brought word that he had gone to be with his Saviour, and that she had not reached Foochow. What a bitter home-coming for that poor soul! She needs our prayers sorely.

"It was a feeling of intense pity for her fellow-countrypeople still in heathen darkness that led Mrs. Ahok to leave her home, her husband, and her only little boy, to plead with the women of England to go and 'save them.' The burden of her addresses might be summed up in these words, so frequently on her lips:—

"'The Chinese are like lost sheep, you must go quickly and find them; they are in utter darkness, give them the light of God.'

"With her whole heart she gave herself to this work, not

caring to spend any of the precious time in seeing the wonderful sights of England. 'Let me have a meeting every day,' she said, 'or two, if possible, that I may tell a great many people, and then go back quickly to China.' In about 100 days she had over ninety meetings. Even before she had finished all that were arranged for her, letters from China made her feel anxious about her husband, and she felt she must at once return home.

"Mr. Ahok was fully in sympathy with his wife's object in coming to England; indeed, she often said she came as his 'substitute.' During his illness he wrote as follows:—

"'I realise how great God's grace is in allowing Mrs. Ahok to visit England, and I am so thankful to all the Christian friends who have helped and been kind to her. Many good people rejoice with me in this visit of hers, while others laugh and say my wife has been stolen away by the Christians. Tell Mrs. Ahok I have been a little sick for some weeks. I find it very restful staying quietly at home. This slight illness has greatly benefited me, and drawn my heart nearer my Saviour. Tell Mrs. Ahok, please, not to worry at all about me.'

"When this letter reached England Mrs. Ahok had started on her way back to China, feeling impelled to return thither, yet sorry to leave before her work was finished. With much earnestness she implored those who were to take her place at the remaining meetings to give as her last message the words, 'Come over and help us. The people of China are dying, dying! They are without God; oh, quickly come and save them!'

"How solemn do her words seem now,—'dying,' passing away day by day out of our reach!

"'A million a month in China are dying without God.' Oh that the words might ring in the hearts of all Christ's servants, rousing them to self-sacrifice in the cause of the Master we

profess to love; leading some to follow the example of those dear Chinese servants of Christ, who only ten years ago were bowing down to idols of wood and stone, but who now show a love and devotion to the service of the Master that puts many of us to shame. May our pity and prayers be called forth for Mrs. Ahok in her terrible bereavement. She will have yet other sorrows to bear. Many will sneer and ask 'Where is now thy God?' Letters told us of the heathen relatives standing round like vultures, watching for her husband's death, to seize on his property before she should return, and that it was possible she might, on reaching home, find herself almost penniless.

"The following extract from the pages of the *Gleaner* for November shows that our fears have been fully realised:—

"'Still more sad is the death of the Chinese Christian merchant of Foochow, Mr. Ahok. Only last month we gave the portrait of his wife, our recent visitor in England, and her most touching appeal in behalf of her heathen sisters; and before that number appeared, the news had come which told us that she would reach her native land again to find herself a widow. She had hurried back to China on hearing that her husband was ill; but she just missed the Pacific steamer at Vancouver, and so arrived too late. The piteous thing is that she is homeless and penniless too, the heathen brothers having taken possession of everything; and, still more, that the calamity is attributed to the anger of the gods at Mrs. Ahok's conversion to Christianity. Many sympathising prayers will be offered for her, we are sure. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now *her* God?'"

Mr. Ahok was such a liberal man. He responded warmly to all appeals. At one time giving money, at another land, at another a building, and so on. He was a cheerful giver, and he always looked as if he were very happy.

Regarding the memorial services for Mr. Ahok, Mrs. S. Moore Sites, of the American Mission, wrote as follows :—

In China, it is customary among the better classes to keep the body in the home, hermetically sealed in its coffin, for seven times seven days; the coffin being revarnished each seventh day; at the last, having the appearance of a finely lacquered casket. The seventh day fell on Sunday, and at 2.30 each Sabbath a memorial service has been held in the largest reception hall, back of which, in a smaller hall, stands the coffin.

At the first of these services there was a feeling of desolation about the place that was oppressive. We entered the beautiful residence, but the cheery face with its kindly welcome did not meet us. We felt that the place was for ever robbed of the generous hand which had for so many years been extended to all, whether intimate friend or foreign stranger; whether the poorest fishermen refugees, driven from their island home "for Christ's sake and the Gospel's," or the gilded retinue of the official circle, to which he himself belonged. Adding to this sensation of change and bereavement, was the weird appearance of four children and grandchildren, all dressed in sackcloth, and seated on a straw mat on the floor beside the big coffin, while daughters-in-law and other female friends, dressed in coarse unbleached muslin, sat about, weeping silently or with loud lamentation.

Then, too, our minds went out over the wide sea toward Mrs. Ahok, still far away in mid-ocean, journeying homeward, all unconscious of the irreparable loss she had sustained. And in the midst of this desolation of heart, and strange awe under the mysterious providence, we heard the voices of influential heathen friends whispering, "Alas! this calamity comes

because of heaven's wrath;" "Those who leave the ways of our ancestors, and follow after the gods of foreign countries, must incur heaven's displeasure;" or, "This is the just punishment we predicted the gods would send upon the Chinese lady who would venture off from her own excellent country into the unknown lands of outside strangers."

But the audience that assembled on this occasion was mainly composed of Chinese Christian representatives from the three missions in Foochow. The service was under the management of Rev. Hu Sing Mi and Dr. Sites. The former was Mr. Ahok's pastor; and after prayer, and singing in Chinese the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," he delivered a short address, speaking particularly of the broad spirit of Christian love which was shown in Mr. Ahok's life and labours, ever since he became a Christian. At the conclusion of Rev. Hu Sing Mi's remarks, a Rev. native brother, of the English Church Mission, was invited to speak, and he did so in most loving and pathetic words, citing instances where Mr. Ahok had extended to members of his Church both heart sympathy and financial aid.

The next speaker was the Rev. Mr. Woodin, of the American Board Mission. He dwelt especially upon the activity of the Christian life of him whom we mourned. He referred to instances, where he had met Christians far away from Foochow, whom, greatly to his surprise, he found, on inquiry, had been led to Christ through Mr. Ahok's teaching; of his interest in the community hospital, not only in bountifully aiding it with his money, but in self-sacrificing personal effort, by daily walking there, in the early morning dawn, and gathering the employees and such patients as were able to come together, and praying with them, and seeing that all the suffering ones were having their wants attended to.

The next speaker was the Rev. Dr. Sia Sek Ong, who had

been very near to him through all his long weeks of illness, daily prayed with him, and read to him consecutively all St. John's Gospel and the Book of Revelation, and had received from his lips again and again the assurance that "all was well"; that "God's will might be fulfilled in him, whether in life or in death," was his constant and submissive petition.

He was followed by Rev. G. B. Smyth, who spoke, expressing the sense of loss and personal bereavement he felt as he approached the place, which, because of the absent face, could no more be to him as in the days past. He congratulated the Christian Churches in Foochow on what Mr. Ahok's generous, loving heart had done for them, in laying the foundation of our College, of which they were all justly proud; and rejoiced that it was his work now, to be the gardener to tend the plants in the beautiful garden Mr. Ahok's hand had planted; and he besought all present to water it with their prayers and their patronage, that together they might work out to completion the plans and hopes of the founder.

Dr. Sites was the last speaker, and confined his remarks to the life as he observed it in the sacred enclosure of home and the sickroom through weary weeks of pain and suffering. Of his final hours he said—

"On the Saturday evening before Mr. Ahok died, I came to the house and up to the sickroom, which had become nearly as familiar to me as my own home, from almost daily visitations for many weeks before. As I approached the door I heard singing; found Dr. Sia Sek Ong and half a dozen other Christians about his bed; I joined them in the hymn, and when it was finished I asked Mr. Ahok if it was not too much noise. He said, 'No,' '*ngwai cheng hwang hi*' (I am very happy). '*Siong Ta ong cheng twai*' (God's grace is very abundant). We again sang, 'I am trusting, Lord, in Thee, dear Lamb of

Calvary,' and I prayed; but it was a prayer of thanksgiving. So blessed was it to share the hour with one so soon to enter upon his eternal weight of glory.

"Mr. Ahok thanked us, but we told him we were only sharing his happiness, standing at heaven's portals, even seeing within —the place seemed so near to God. He thanked us again, and when I said to him, 'If you are going home to-night I want to stay here with you,' he replied, 'To-morrow is the Sabbath; you have your services to attend to. I want you to begin by meeting with my employees in the store at seven o'clock. Go home now and rest.' I said, 'And where do you think you will worship to-morrow, on earth, or in heaven?' He answered solemnly, 'As God wills.' The Sabbath came, and unexpectedly he remained with us. His attendants thought him better. But all the while he was gliding on the stream which was carrying him farther from us, and nearer the pearly gates.

"On Monday evening we gathered about him for the last time. He was suffering much pain. I said, addressing him in the usual familiar way, 'Lo peng, do you feel that the everlasting arms are underneath you, or have you any fear?' He answered clearly, '*Ngwai cheng ping ang*' (I have great peace). I asked, 'Whence does this peace come?' and he promptly replied: 'It is God's free, unmerited gift to me.' I said, 'Do you think you are going home to-night?' and he answered, 'I'll obey God's will.' Putting my arms about his little son, I said, 'Have you any message for Jimmy?' He looked wistfully at the child, and, while affection's tear trickled down his wan face, he replied, 'I have committed him to God.'

"His breath was coming shorter, and we knew he had almos reached the other shore. We sang a verse and offered a few sentences of supplicating prayer. Dr. Sia Sek Ong repeated,

'Clinging to the cross,' and 'Only Christ,' and the dying man responded, 'Truly, only Christ.' Eighteen or twenty persons were in the room, but all was still. He indicated to his attendants what he wanted, and they refreshed his lips with ice-water. Little Charlie bent over him, watching for the slow coming breath. Slow and more slowly it came. The clock struck nine; and just then, as we repeated Stephen's words, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' he ceased to breathe, and our Mr. Ahok of the past was no more."

The audience, deeply moved, sang, "There'll be no sorrow there." Special prayer was offered for the bereaved wife, that she might be kept in peace on her homeward voyage, and strengthened in soul and body, to meet the unexpected trial before her.

"BEHOLD THE HANDMAIDEN OF THE LORD."

By the Rev. F. H. Wood, M.A.

Her words still linger in our hearts, though swiftly homeward faring,
She hastes to hear the billows break upon her native strand,
Called by a loved and suffering voice, ere yet her holy daring
Has fully wrought the heavenly task that pity gave in hand.

But ere the shores of far Cathay she reaches, eager-hearted,
The gloom of desolating death has crossed her threshold's floor.
A husband blessed her as she went: with prayer and hope they parted;
The meeting of those loving hearts remains a bliss in store!

And wherefore came her prowess forth, across the angry sighing
Of waves that roll in weary leagues around our stranger isle,
Save but to strive, with conquering plea, for those whose hopes are dying,
For lack of love our slumbering zeal holds idle yet awhile ?

She sat among us, and we heard her tuneful supplication,
The very tones, within our souls, some memory seemed to greet ;
And when we saw her mind revealed, by swift interpretation,
We knew again the old, old cry, " Oh, give ye them to eat ! "

Oh, sweetly came her burdened prayer, impressive in its sadness—
" A thousand gifts are yours," she urged, " that ye may have to give ;
From idol-gods my heart was weaned, I leapt from fears to gladness.
'Twas one of you who brought me life—let others hear and live !

" For when the teeming fields are ripe, the harvest calls the reaper.
If many toil the barns are full ; with few, the sheaves decay ;
And see, how millions wander wide, while Israel's loving Keeper
Looks sadly on the scattered flock, for dear to Him are they !

" They say I left my sunny home in search of changeful pleasure ;
My land is all aglow with sheen and rings with ancient fame !
Nay, 'twas for sister-lives from you to crave your holiest treasure,
O'er tossing seas, with bruisèd feet and shrinking heart I came.

"For, as I mused in silent thought within my peaceful dwelling,
My heart grew all aglow for Him, whose pity now I knew;
I marvelled how he came *Himself*, His own salvation telling,
And felt that they who hold His gift must tell it—will not you?"

India's Women (January 1891).

CHAPTER XIII

Called to Higher Service

DURING the next twelve years the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society rented Mrs. Ahok's house, and used it for a school, and Mrs. Ahok was invaluable to the missionaries in introducing them to the homes of the rich, as soon as the mourning days were over, and she could once more face life. She also educated her boys. In 1900 I received the following letter from the prayed-for son :—

My dear Mrs. Fagg,

I am so glad to say that I am studied English for three terms in order that I can write you a few lines now.

When I was a little boy from my mother I often heard of your kindness having bestowed me and my brother, and my family, so that I keep you very warmly in our remembrance indeed.

I have been happening a miserable event that it was the season of my father's death when my mother was in England, by and by my mother returned home from England my father was no where to be seen. Oh, how full of sorrow she was. After this my business was all closed up and my family was soon becoming in want of money. It of course made my mother more sorrowful.

Then, thank God, my living house was rent by Miss Leslie

and Miss Lee for the purpose of opening a girl school so that we could be able to get the rent of my house to buy food and clothing for my family. But it was so unfortunate that in consequence of school girl being dead for an epidemic the school was all given up at once in last year Chinese October. It was not only for us to lose the rent of my house but for us to have no money to spend at all. Now I am studying in the College, I can not be able to restore my mother and my family from poverty : but I only always keep my brave heart and unbounded trust in God.

I have married for two years, though my wife is not a Christian girl, but since she came to me she was very glad to accept the Gospel preached, and three months ago, I was getting a son who has been offered to Baptism already, I want you to pray for us. Please pray for us. Trusting you and your family are well. Valuable replying is best wishes. With kindest regards,

Believe me, yours obediently,

JAMES AHOK.

Later on I received another letter telling of the wife's conversion, and James being taken on as a teacher in the College. Then came a letter from one of the missionaries in August 1904, with the following startling news :—

Poor Mrs. Ahok has lost her only son—whom you prayed for—he died only a few days ago ; his wife is very ill too. James has left three children, one only a few months old. This year he had been employed in the College as a teacher, and had just begun to earn money for his family. It was a great loss to Mrs. Ahok when the school was removed from her house. I know you will feel great sympathy for her, and you will pray that this trial may be made a blessing to her.

Then from a Chinese friend the following testimony is given :—

I think you have heard of the death of Jimmy Ahok, he died believing, and trusting in Jesus, I am very sorry for Mrs. Ahok, among many kind messages for us he said "My father was a good man, he has done so many good works great pity I have not done it yet, if God spare my life I would be a witness for Jesus, among my relations and friends." Before he died he said "The angels are standing beside me, you pray the Holy Spirit may comfort my mother and wife." We cannot understand why God take him so soon, it must be some good and wise reason. "What I do thou knowest not now but shall know it hereafter."

Finally we cull from *India's Women and China's Daughters* the article by Miss Faithfull Davies, "Called to Higher Service."

MR. JIMMY AHOK.

Many who have read the booklet, *A Remarkable Answer to Prayer*, will be grieved to hear that the child of prayer has been taken away from his mother; for the son, who has been the joy of Mrs. Ahok's heart for twenty-three years, died last August.

When I first knew Jimmy Ahok he was a shy, quiet boy, but his interest in England and English customs would sometimes unseal his lips. He was engaged in studying Chinese classics with a native teacher. He was clever and diligent, and he won several prizes for writing Chinese poetry.

In February 1899, when he was eighteen years old, he married a girl, whom, according to Chinese custom, he had never seen before. He did not leave his mother's house on his marriage, but both he and Charlie, Mrs. Ahok's adopted son, lived on at Hok Le with her. A few weeks after his marriage, he began

MRS. AHOK AND HER GRANDCHILDREN.

to attend the Anglo-Chinese College as a day-boarder, and studied English very diligently for several years. During this time his two little boys were born.

At the end of last year he finished his course at the College, and the American missionaries thought so highly of his powers that they asked him to become a teacher. In March he began his new work. His influence over the heathen boys was very good, and he tried to lead his pupils to Christ.

Not only among his own countrymen did this young Chinese Christian bear witness for Christ. At a prayer meeting held in Foochow early this year, an American, who had lately come to Foochow as an insurance agent, said how much impressed he had been by the behaviour of the young English-speaking Chinese men. He told how one student to whom he had been talking had said to him, "Do you love Jesus?" and the simple, earnest question had made him feel that, if the Anglo-Chinese schools could turn out such young men, the work was indeed worth while. The student who asked that question was Jimmy Ahok.

At the end of June the College was closed, and the missionaries went to Kuliang to escape the heat. Early in July Jimmy's wife was very ill. Mischief had begun in one lung some time before, but she became suddenly worse, and had three severe hæmorrhages, with very little interval between them. Her husband nursed and tended her day and night, and, in his anxiety for her, he would not say that he himself felt ill. When he had to give in, the doctor pronounced his illness to be pneumonia. He grew rapidly worse. At first he would beg his mother and his adopted brother to pray that he might get well. He would say, "I am very young, I do not want to die. I have not been so good a man as my father, for he was famed for his goodness; but, if I live, I will be better."

At another time he said, "I have not tried enough to influence

the neighbours. When I get well, I will have a service for them, and teach them to worship God." A catechist came to read and pray with him, and Jimmy told him, too, of his regret at having done so little for his heathen neighbours. The following day he became unconscious, and lay in a stupor, but the day after he seemed to recover consciousness. To test whether he were himself again, Mrs. Ahok pointed to Charlie, who stood near the door of the room, and said, "Who is that?" "It is my dear brother," said the invalid; "I love him very much."

Suddenly he pointed to a corner of the room, and said, "Look! there are God's angels. I see them. They have come to fetch me."

Mrs. Ahok thought him delirious, and said, "Do you know me? Who is it, here, near you?"

"You are my dear mother," said Jimmy.

"Pray that you may live," Mrs. Ahok entreated. "Pray to God that you may get well."

"No, no," he answered. "I am going—I am going Home." And so he died.

I heard the story from Mrs. Ahok's own lips when I went to comfort her. She sobbed as though her heart were broken when she told of all that her son had been to her. Grief has made her look years older than before.

Mrs. Jimmy Ahok is now much better in health, but she will hardly move or speak. When I went to see her a month after her husband's death, she sat crouched on her bed with bent head. She pressed my hand, and tears ran down her face, but she would not utter a word. I urged her, for the sake of her little ones, to obey the doctor's orders to sit in the open courtyard, and to take nourishing food. Their two sons are wee boys. The younger cannot talk yet, but the older one would ask, "Why has father gone to heaven? Let us send a sedan chair

and coolies for him." Another day, seeing his grandmother crying, the little fellow fetched a dollar—all his little store—and gave it to her to comfort her.

Hok Le is truly a house of mourning, and only two things seem to cheer poor Mrs. Ahok. One is the vision of angels, which her son saw, and the other is that friends in England will be praying for her. She knew that Miss Mead and I had written home to ask this for her. Will all who read these words remember at the Throne of Grace both the bereaved mother and the broken-hearted young wife ?

And now, dear friends, will not each reader do three things ?

No. I. Pray daily for their sisters lying in heathen darkness.

No. II. Lay by a tenth of their income for God's work, and use a proportionate part for the poor heathen.

We are bound to obey our Master's command, "Go ye to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This Book, God's Word, is settled for ever in heaven, therefore this verse will confront you up there, and when the Master says, "Did you obey this *last* command of Mine ? " what will you answer ?

In this matter we *dare* not choose what *we* will do. This command is to each alike who call the Saviour "Master and Lord." We must show our obedience by our actions.

I need hardly speak of the need ; you know it well. But I will give the following from the late Rev. Daniel Wilson, Vicar of Islington :—

"Is it not a solemn fact that, taking the world at large, of every three persons walking on the vast globe,

two have never heard of the Saviour, have never seen a Bible, know nothing of heaven and nothing of hell!"

The dying words of the missionary veteran, Simeon H. Calhoun, were :—

"It is my deep conviction, and I say it again and again, that if the Church of Christ were what she ought to be, twenty years would not pass away till the story of the Cross will be uttered in the ears of every living man."

In that day it will not do for any Christian to hide behind the screen of the "poor in our own land" and "charity begins at home," for we know that, as a rule, those who do most at home do most for the heathen abroad.

No. III. May I ask every reader of this book to get at least one friend to purchase a copy ?

Miss Gordon Cumming, in her admirable volume on *Wanderings in China*, writes most interestingly of Mr. and Mrs. Ahok, and her visit to their house. If you have not read it, we strongly recommend your doing so at once.

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